

Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (NY-28), Congressman Chris Lee (NY-26), and Congressman Brian Higgins (NY-27) sent a letter to the Senate Finance Committee urging the quick implementation of much-needed aviation safety improvements contained in the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization bill. Many of these needed provisions were included in bipartisan legislation the trio of Western New York Representatives introduced that passed the U.S. House of Representatives in October of 2009. Their legislation, H.R. 3371, the Airline Safety and Pilot Training Improvement Act, includes a number of long overdue reforms that address aviation safety and restores passenger confidence in the wake of the Continental Connection Flight 3407 tragedy that claimed the lives of 50 people on February 12, 2009.

“Since the NTSB hearings last May, we have pushed and pushed for this legislation that hopefully will prevent other families from having to suffer through what we have suffered through,” said Kevin Kuwik, who lost his girlfriend Lorin Maurer. “We have been patiently waiting for Finance Committee action on this bill since July, and as the one year anniversary quickly approaches, our patience is wearing thin. Many thanks to our Western New York delegation for reaching out to Senators Baucus and Grassley; hopefully this will help our voices to be heard.”

“It’s time for the Senate to pass this important legislation,” said Congresswoman Slaughter. “Almost a year ago we lost 50 people in the tragic crash of Flight 3407. Here in the House we’ve done the studies, held the hearings and passed the legislation. We know what needs to be done – there must be a database of pilot records, we must do more to fight pilot fatigue and we must improve pilot training. These reforms are too important for any further delay.”

“The House of Representatives has done its part in passing these bipartisan reforms to address aviation safety, and the time for the Senate to act is now,” said Congressman Chris Lee. “Millions of Americans utilize air travel every day, and they trust that those piloting their aircraft have the best training and are as well rested as possible. I call on the Senate to immediately act on these meaningful reforms to immediately improve airline safety for all Americans.”

“Over the last several months we held hearings, heard testimony and wrote legislation that addresses the urgent need for improved airline safety,” said Congressman Higgins. “As we

approach the one year anniversary of the tragedy that shook the Western New York region we need to move beyond talk and create the change we need and airline passengers deserve.”

The letter to Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-MT) and Ranking Member Chuck Grassley (R-IA) touts the efforts of the families who lost loved ones in the Flight 3407 tragedy, who “have tirelessly fought to improve the safety of our skies through countless meetings with Members of Congress and aviation experts, frequent trips to Washington, D.C. to attend hearings, and constant appeals for action.”

A copy of the letter was also sent to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) and Republican Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY).

FULL TEXT OF LETTER:

Senator Max Baucus Senator Chuck Grassley

Chairman Ranking Member

United States Senate Finance Committee United States Senate Finance Committee

219 Dirksen Senate Office Building 219 Dirksen Senate Office Building

Washington, D.C. 20510 Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Baucus and Ranking Member Grassley:

We write to you today to bring to your attention the urgent need for your Committee to act on much-needed aviation safety improvements in the FAA Reauthorization bill.

The February 12, 2009 crash of Continental Connection Flight 3407 in Clarence Center, New York took the lives of 49 onboard the aircraft and one person on the ground. This tragedy has shed light on the serious safety concerns we face every time we fly. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) has held public hearings and issued preliminary reports on the factors contributing to the crash, and numerous hearings have been held in both houses of Congress. Nearly one year after the crash, Congress has not enacted legislation to address the clearly identified deficiencies in pilot training, crew rest, pilot commuting among other issues.

The families who suffered the loss of a loved one on Flight 3407 have tirelessly fought to improve the safety of our skies through countless meetings with Members of Congress and aviation experts, frequent trips to Washington, D.C. to attend hearings, and constant appeals for action. This year-long effort resulted in House passage of the Airline Safety and Pilot Training Improvement Act last October. This bill included a number of long-sought-after reforms, including new rules on stall recovery training, pilot rest and minimum training and experience requirements for flight crews. Unfortunately, action on many of these safety reforms has been held up in the Senate.

While the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation has marked up S.1451, the Air Transportation Modernization and Safety Improvement Act, your Committee has yet to consider the revenue title for the bill. As we approach the one-year anniversary of this terrible tragedy, we urge you to move forward with consideration of this bipartisan, overdue and absolutely necessary aviation safety reform bill. Each day Congress delays puts the flying public at unnecessary risk. We can wait no longer.

It has taken more than 40 years to overhaul FAA rules governing aviation safety. It is time to act now without delay to ensure the very best pilots with the best training are in the cockpit of our nation's commercial airliners. We appreciate your efforts and look forward to working with you further on these issues.

Sincerely,

Christopher J. Lee

Member of Congress

Louise Slaughter

Member of Congress

Brian Higgins

Member of Congress

CC: Majority Leader Harry Reid

Minority Leader Mitch McConnell